



january 2016

the wyoming game & fish department

LANDER REGION newsletter

In the Field

Wolverine detection



At left: Pacific marten visiting one of the wolverine bait sites. Above: Lee Tafelmeyer skiing into rebait and check one of the camera sites.

During the month of December, Nongame Biologists Lee Tafelmeyer, Clint Atkinson and Seth Halman, with help from other Game and Fish employees, conducted remote camera surveys for wolverines throughout potential habitat in mountain ranges in western Wyoming. They used skis, snowmobiles and snowshoes to check the 25 cameras and rebait sites once a month.

The Nongame Program is collaborating with Montana, Idaho, and Washington to survey for wolverines in the lower 48 states in order to document distribution and assess occupancy. While not for the faint of heart, the work does offer beautiful vistas and a chance to gain valuable information about Wyoming's wolverines. The project will continue through March this year and will pick up again this fall and be completed in spring 2017.

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From the Air

Seminoe bighorns



Seminoe bighorn sheep. Photo by Gary Sundberg.

Dillon Herman, east Rawlins game warden, spent several hours in the air locating collared bighorn sheep in the Seminoe Mountains. A total of 23 of the 24 sheep were located, and none were indicating there were any mortalities. During the flight a total of 74 sheep were counted.

These sheep were transplanted over the last few years from the Devils Canyon herd to help bolster this Ferris/ Seminoe herd. Another transplant is scheduled this year as well.

Out of the Case Files

Mistaken identity



Swift fox. Photo by Mark Gocke.

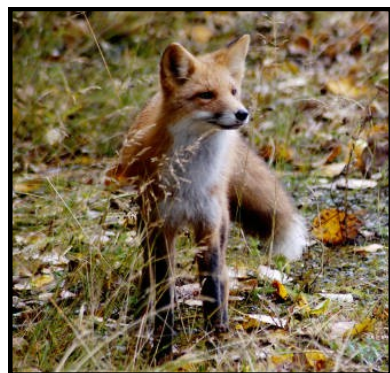
South Riverton Game Warden Brad Gibb has documented several cases of mistaken identity or misinformation regarding swift foxes. They can be easily confused with coyote pups and red foxes. These species are sometimes hard to tease apart if



Coyote pups. Photo by USFWS

they are not next to one another and if there is nothing on the landscape to show relative size. However, they are classified differently and take of each animal differs. Swift

foxes are considered a species of greatest conservation need, are legally classified as nongame in Wyoming and are not available to harvest. Coyotes and red foxes are classified as predators and can be taken by any means, at any time. So that you don't find yourself in violation of a game law, take a minute to look at the chart below to learn more about identification of the three species.



Red fox. Photo by USFWS.

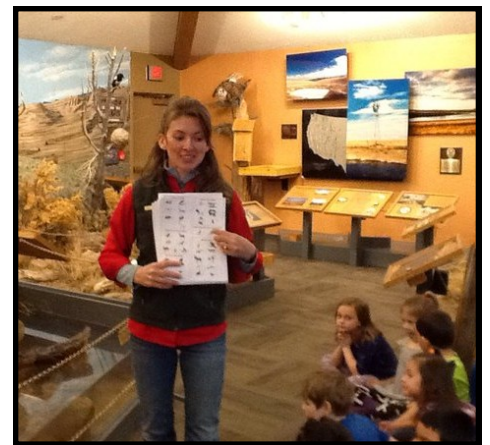
Species	Size and shape	Face	Tail	Legs
Swift fox	5-7 lbs./ house cat size	very delicate, small pointed snout, black patches on side of snout	bushy, black tip	tan front legs, very delicate looking
Coyote pup	variable size, puppy like shape	more robust, shorter snout, "puppy face"	not bushy, black tip	tan front legs, more stocky and robust than swift fox
Red fox	7-15 lbs	delicate, pointed snout	bushy, white tip	black front legs, longer legs than swift

With the Children

Habitats and adaptations



Education Specialist Rene Schell gave multiple education programs to Lander grade school students about animal habitats and adaptations. This month the school visits made it onto twitter and into the elementary school newsletter. And for the first time, the renovated library was used as an educational space for the students who loved seeing the new taxidermied animals on display from bats, voles, ducks, ferrets, fish, and much more.



[Come tweet with us!](#)
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With the Deer

It's all about the fawns



Mule deer does and fawns. Photo by Stan Harter.

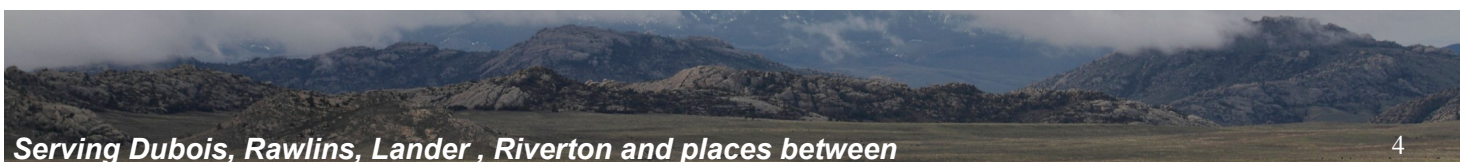
What a difference the weather can make! Over the past two years much of Wyoming has received timely precipitation. Beginning in September and October 2013, much of the Lander Region received more than three times the average precipitation with rain and snow that soaked into the warm, unfrozen ground. This moisture created ideal conditions for a fall green-up, which helped mule deer, pronghorn and most wildlife enter the winter in optimal condition. Then again in spring and summer 2014, more rains came, creating some of the best grass growth across the state most long-time residents had seen in decades. Similar events occurred in fall 2014 and spring 2015.

Mule deer classifications in the Lander Region were completed in November and December and thankfully observed fawn ratios were outstanding for a second year. Observed fawn ratios ranged from 56 fawns per 100 does (or 56/100) in the Beaver Rim herd unit to 90/100 in the Sweetwater herd unit. Most notable, ratios were observed to be greater than 60/100 once again in the Ferris herd unit where in 2013 a meager 29/100 were observed. To see mule deer populations grow, a minimum of 66/100 does are usually needed.

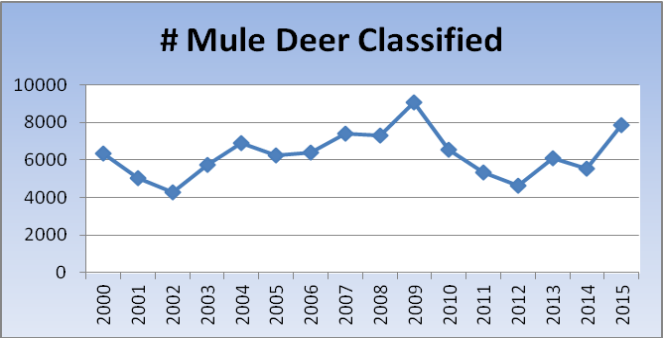
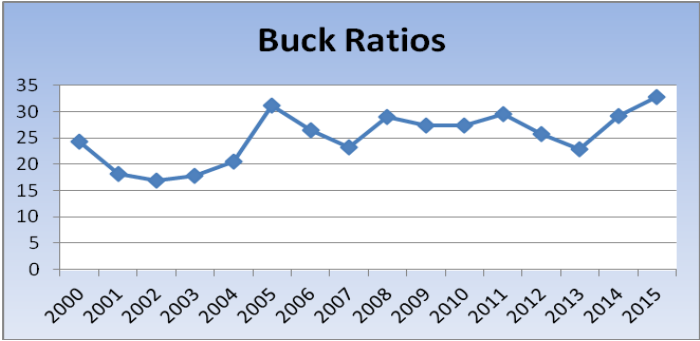
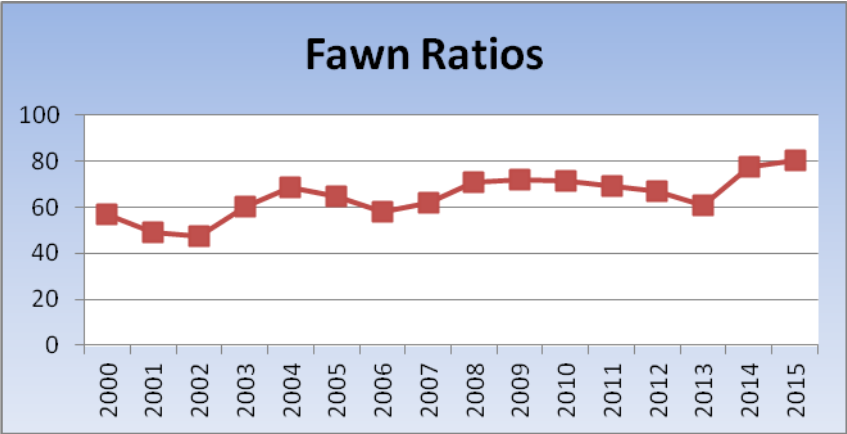
Concurrent with increased fawn production and survival, the past two years observed buck ratios have rebounded nicely and region wide were greater than 30 bucks/100 does. Buck ratios ranged from 21/100 in the Sweetwater herd unit to 49/100 in the Beaver Rim herd unit.



Class 3 buck. Photo by Stan Harter.



Also in late 2015 personnel counted a total 7,880 mule deer. This represents the third year of overall increased counts since the low in 2012. This observed increase in the number of mule deer is again concurrent with increased fawn production and survival, and is testament to the importance of the Game and Fish’s Mule Deer Initiative’s mantra **“It’s all about the fawns!”**



Tables above show Lander Region averages over the last 15 years.



Mule deer with Crooks Peak in the distance. Photo by Stan Harter.

On the back page



West Rawlins Game Warden Teal Joseph glasses the landscape on mule deer winter range patrol. Each year game wardens from around the state work stints on winter range patrols to maintain a presence near susceptible mule deer herds to watch for poachers or suspicious activity.

A bobcat keeps a watchful eye on East Rawlins Game Warden Dillon Herman while he checks trap compliance.

Checking that traps are legal and marked with the identification of the trapper is just one of a game wardens many duties.



Check out the Lander Region Webpage for more great information!

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regional-Offices/Lander-Region>

And sign up to receive the newsletter electronically

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/email-sign-up>

